

## [Proto Buddhism - The Original Teachings of the Buddha](#)

By Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Nayaka Maha Thera

<http://buddhaoriginalteachings.blogspot.com/p/protobuddhism.html>

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**Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji Maha Thera**, a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka, has spent more than sixty years of research, to discover the original teachings of the Buddha, by making an in-depth intensive study of both the theory as well as the practice of Buddhism.

Venerable Punnaji discovered that the original teachings were found in the Pali Nikayas preserved by the Theravadins, though not fully understood by them. Modern scholars were unable to get at the original teachings because they focused their attention on a later interpretation of the teachings called the Abhidharma and commentaries. There were several commentaries written by different schools of thought during the time of Emperor Asoka. What is today popular among the Theravada school is a collection of commentaries made by the Theravada school called Vibhajjavāda. Even reading the Theravada Suttas by learning Pali, the scriptural language, is not necessarily successful. This is because the interpretation of the Pali language itself is based on the later commentaries, which sometimes can be quite misleading. Moreover, the translations of the scriptures by Western scholars have introduced many interpretational errors due to language difficulties.

It takes a highly critical and intellectual person, with an excellent command of both Pali as well the English language, and who has a background of modern philosophy, modern psychology, and modern science as well as having tested and experienced advanced states of meditation to translate into English the deeper and profound teachings of the Buddha. The author certainly is very well equipped for this task. Venerable Punnaji is well versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge, including medicine, and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, modern philosophy and psychology. His interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism. No modern scholar has so far taken the time and energy necessary to be able to identify the elusive original teachings of the Buddha.

His mission has been to disseminate his findings through publications, sermons, workshops, conference presentations, Internet postings, and meditation retreats to a world- wide audience. He is well known for his clear and accurate presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over.

The three booklets – Ariyamagga Bhāvanā I, II, and III – is an effort to gradually introduce the essence of Buddhist meditation. It is both logical and comprehensive. A careful study of the contents will also expose the reader to many unknown or misunderstood teachings of the Buddha. This booklet also reveals how the Buddha solved the problem of existence, and how a serious practitioner could Awaken from the Dream of Existence – Nibbāna.

Venerable Mahathera M. Punnaji is a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka of the Theravada tradition. Bhante is a disciple of His Holiness The Madihe Pannasiha, the late Maha Nayaka Thera of Vajirarama, Head of the Mihiripanne Dhammarakkhita Amarapura Nikaya. Bhante Punnaji was ordained at the Bhikkhu Training Centre, Maharagama, in his thirties. He obtained his training in meditation at the Island Hermitage, Dodanduwa.

In 1971 Ven. Punnaji was sent by his preceptor, the Most Ven. Madihe Paññasiha, to the newly started Washington Buddhist Vihara, the only Sri Lankan Vihara in America at that time. In 1977 he was invited to Boston and became the president of the Triple Gem society, where he taught yoga and meditation to Americans and conducted a research in Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy, in association with the Boston University and Harvard University. In 1980 he conducted a course in Buddhist philosophy in the University of Vermont, at the Living and Learning Centre. In 1981 he was invited to Canada to be the Abbot of the Toronto Maha Vihara. In 1974 he was invited by Mr. R. Premadasa (who later became the President of Sri Lanka) to be the director of the Mihindu Sarasaviya, a Buddhist Research Institute in Mihintale Sri Lanka. In 1977 he was invited to the Fo Kuan Shan Monastic University in Taiwan as a Professor of Buddhism. Since then he has been living in retirement in North America teaching meditation, Buddhist philosophy and psychology.

He studied modern science and Western medicine in Sri Lanka and he obtained two doctorates while in the United States, one is Western psychology and another in Western philosophy and comparative religion. Bhante Punnaji has made an in-depth research into the original teachings of the Buddha which he thinks is different from all the modern schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana including Zen and Pure- land Buddhism. This research was not only academic but also experiential. Bhante also did research into the form of Buddhist Psychotherapy which he thinks is the best way to introduce Buddhism to the modern world. As Buddhism in its original form was not a mere religion of faith and worship but a psychological technique of growth and evolution of the human consciousness.

Bhante Punnaji presents Buddhism as a growth technique that transforms an individual's disposition by changing a person's sense of values and goal in life while it also overcomes the stress and strain of modern living. Bhante points out that the teaching of the Buddha is about a conscious return to the original equilibrium which the normal person loses in childhood due to unconscious emotional impulses. This return to the original equilibrium called NIBBANA is achieved through a psychological technique of conscious evolution of the human consciousness where the human being goes through a paradigm shift and thereby transcends all human weakness and enters a superhuman "divine" state which all religions worship as "God". This means that Buddhism is a humanistic philosophy that recognizes the unity in all religions and defines "religion", "God" and "divinity" from a humanistic point of view. This also means that the Buddha has brought a saving message of hope to the world by introducing a very optimistic philosophy that guarantees a freedom from all human weakness and suffering by means of a conscious human psychological techniques of growth and evolution of the human mind which brings results here and now.

Bhante Punnaji has many students in the United States, Canada and Europe who had benefitted from his teachings and who express their appreciation by speaking about the immense change in their lives for the better. Bhante is well known for his clear, accurate and original presentation of Buddhism and has grateful students the world over/in many parts of the world.

Bhante Punnaji is well-versed in Western fields of scientific knowledge including medicine and has a thorough understanding of comparative religions, philosophy and psychology. Bhante's interpretations of the original teachings of the Buddha have been much enriched by these forays beyond a mere study and practice of Buddhism.

Bhante has played a significant role in the dissemination of Buddhism in the West and is well known to Buddhist in Canada, United States and abroad. Sought by many as a resourceful spiritual guide, Bhante Punnaji shares his time between the Buddhist centres in Canada, United States, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and other countries.

### **Early Life**

Born Pushpananda Madawela on November 26, 1929, in Sri Lanka, Reverend Punnaji started meditating when he was five years old. As he grew up in Sri Lanka, he began getting interested in Buddhism while other children were starting school. He wanted to become a monk when he was seven, and knew he would become one when he was 17.

Growing up in Sri Lanka under his mother's religious upbringing, Reverend Punnaji became interested in Buddhism at an age when children were just starting school. However, due to his parents' wishes for him to do well academically and also his interest in science, Reverend Punnaji studied medicine and eventually became a general practitioner.

After a decade in practice, the deeply religious medical officer decided to hang up his coat and put on a saffron robe, passing all his belongings to his sister in the process. He was a doctor for 10 years when he decided to renounce all things worldly in life to become a monk at the age of 38.

He attributed the decision to his mother's influence, the monks he met and the Buddhist teachings he read.

"After I renounced everything, I came out of hell. Everyday life is full of suffering and unhappiness. As a monk, I don't experience these."

"It's something a layperson will find hard to understand," he says.

When he retreated to a meditation centre in a forest once, his friend visited him and asked why he wanted to suffer in such a place.

"I told him I was having the happiest time of my life. He couldn't understand.

"Meditation allows one to give up sensual pleasures, purify the mind and experience true happiness," says Punnaji.

Today, the senior resident monk in the Maha Vihara Temple in Brickfields is in charge of training young monks. He plans to teach them ways to examine Buddhism from a scientific view.

"Buddhism, in its original form, is not at all opposed to science.

"There's a correlation between scientific thinking, western psychology and Buddhism.

"I can show that the teachings of Buddha can be spoken in modern terms, not only mythical."

Discover the original teachings of the Buddha by Ven. Dr Bhante Mahathera Punnaji, please visit

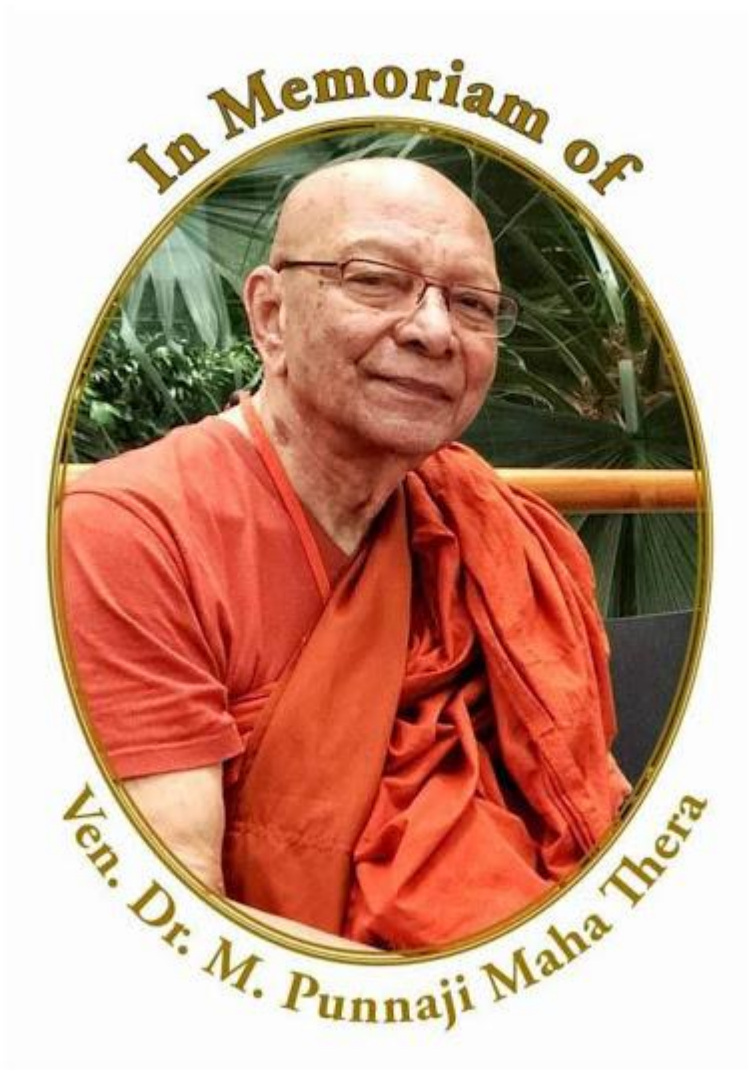
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### **In Memoriam**

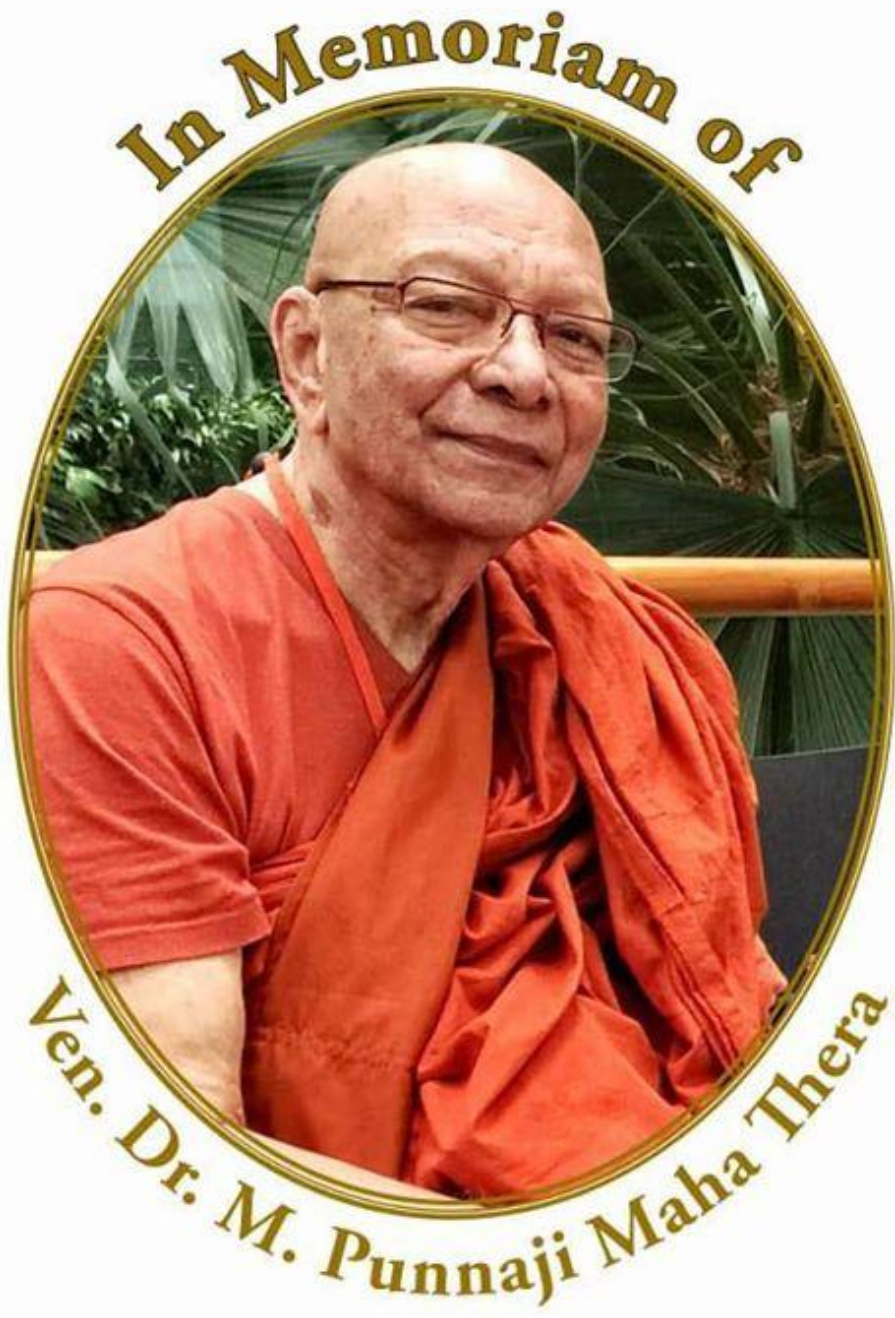
Anicca Vatha Sankhara. The Buddhist Maha Vihara is deeply saddened to report that the Late Ven. Dr M Punnaji passed away very peacefully in the morning of 27th July 2018, in Sri Lanka. His remains now lies at his temple at Vajiraramaya, Primrose Road, Kandy, Sri Lanka. The funeral service will be held on Monday 30th July at 1 pm. At the request left behind by the late Venerable, his entire remains will be donated to the medical services at 4 pm of the same day. May Venerable Punnaji attain the highest bliss of Nibbāna soonest.



[Source](#)

[Buddhist Maha Vihara Malaysia](#)  
[28 Juli](#) ·

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## **Remembering Bhante Madawela Punnaji**

By Ven. Dr. Walpola Piyananda, Maha Nayaka Thera

I personally and all who knew him were saddened to hear of the passing of our Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji. Venerable Dr. Madawela Punnaji

He made a lasting impression on everyone he met. He certainly was not the average Sri Lankan Theravadan monk, who becomes a novice in his teens or pre-teens and then has his entire education and life dedicated towards practicing as a Buddhist monk, which he continued until his death at age 89, when he passed away with his mind and his voice as sharp and as clear as ever.

Bhante Punnaji was highly educated in both Western science and Buddhism. He was in fact a practicing physician for many years before deciding to dedicate himself to a life as a Buddhist monk.

He became one of the foremost meditation teachers in all of Buddhism. He was an iconoclast – indeed, many traditional Sri Lankan Buddhists and even Buddhist monks were sometime uncomfortable with his teachings -- but he backed up everything he said with his own experience and his research.

He was totally dedicated to the truth, and he found that truth in Buddhism. He was quite taken with Western Psychology and the relationship between psychology and Buddhism was an ongoing theme for him. He wrote countless articles and books on these subjects while maintaining a steady schedule of meditation classes and retreats.

Bhante Punnaji traveled extensively until his last years, rarely staying in one place too long. Fortunately, one place he came back to time and again, starting from its founding in 1980, was Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara. He wrote many of his articles here with the assistance of some of our Western disciples. He conducted retreats, taught some yoga, and continued his own research throughout his life.

Yes, Bhante Punnaji was his own man: he wasn't afraid to express ideas that ran counter to traditional thinking, but it was always supported by his vast knowledge, and never did he do anything to bring Buddhism or the Sangha into disrepute. While I personally did not always agree with his ideas, I realized the importance of the discussion he brought up. And there is no denying that many of the Western disciples as well as Asian Buddhists who practiced meditation with him felt he was the best meditation teacher they had ever encountered.

He left a fairly extensive body of writing, books and articles, which are timeless and which will be sure to influence future generations of meditators. Many will miss that twinkle in your eye.

Thanks for all your years of service to Buddhism and to mankind.

**These are the words of Gautama the Buddha upon enlightenment:**

*Anicca vata sankhara, uppavaya-dhammino*

Impermanence is the nature of all conditioned phenomenon. They arise and pass away, again and again, with great rapidity.

*Uppajjitva nirujjhanti, (2 times)*

*tesam vupasamo sukho.*

When past sensations arise and are met with awareness/equanimity, their cessation brings true happiness.

*Aneka-jati samsaram*

*sandhavissam anibbisam,*

Through countless births in the cycle of existence

I have run, in vain

*Gahakarakam gavesanto*

*dukkha-jati-punappunam.*

seeking the builder of this house; and again and again I faced the discomfort of new birth.

*Gahakaraka! Dithosi,*

*puna geham na kahasi.*

Oh housebuilder! Now you are seen.

You shall not build a house again for me.

*Sabba te phasuka bhagga,*

*gahakutam visankhitam.*

All your beams are broken, the ridgepole is shattered.

*Visankhara-gatam cittam,*

*tanhanam khayamajjhaga.*

The mind has become freed from conditioning; the end of craving has been reached.

*Sabbe sankhara anicca'ti.*

*yada pannaya passati,*

Impermanent are all compounded things, when one perceives this with insight.

*Atha nibbindati dukkhe.*

*esa maggo visuddhiya.*

then one turns away from suffering; this is the path of purification.

*Sabbesu cakkavajesu*

*yakkha deva ca brahmano,*

May the holy entities of all the universes

*Yam amhehi katam punnam,*

*sabba sampatti sadhikam.*

rejoice in this wholesome meditation process performed by us, which is productive of all happiness.

*Sabbe tam anumoditva,*

*samagga sasane rata,*

May they all, unitedly devoted to the teaching

*pamada rahita hontu*

*arakkhasu visesato.*

be without negligence, especially in giving protection.

*Punna bhagamidam c'annam,  
samam dadama karitam.*

We share with all equally the merit of this meditation and other wholesome deeds.

*Anumodantu tam sabbe,  
medini thatu sakkhike.*

May they all accept with joy our sharing, and may the earth stand witness to it!

*Bhavatu sabbe mangalam* (3 times)

May all beings be happy

Source

"If there is no peace in the minds of individuals, how can there be peace in the world? Make peace in your own mind first"

Click below to listen :

SN Goenka is one of the leading teachers of meditation in modern times, touching tens of millions of lives. Until his death in 2013, he worked tirelessly to build [centers](#) of instruction all over the world and to teach. His offering was unique in that it was offered as a gift, no price tag attached, and taught a practice that was not connected with rites/rituals of a religion - rather simply a tool to observe this moment and the mind. It is with that spirit and all the good wishes that he sings to his students upon the completion of every hour of meditation. That offering is what we'd like to share with you this week.

These are the words of Gautama the Buddha upon enlightenment, as sung/chanted by SN Goenka in Pali language which was colloquial in Buddha's time.



*Lyrics and translation:*

**Anicca vata sankhara, uppavaya-dhammino**

*Impermanence is the nature of all conditioned phenomenon. They arise and pass away, again and again, with great rapidity.*

**Uppajjitva nirujjhanti, (2x)**

**tesam vupasamo sukho.**

*When past sensations arise and are met with awareness/equanimity, their cessation brings true happiness.*

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**sandhavisam anibbisam,**

*Through countless births in the cycle of existence  
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**Gahakaraka gavesanto  
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*seeking the builder of this house; and again and again I faced the discomfort of new birth.*

**Gahakaraka! Dithosi,  
puna geham na kahasi.**

*Oh housebuilder! Now you are seen.  
You shall not build a house again for me.*

**Sabba te phasuka bhagga,  
gahakutam visankhitam.**  
*All your beams are broken, the ridgepole is shattered.*

**Visankhara-gatam cittam,  
tanhanam khayamajjhaga.**  
*The mind has become freed from conditioning; the end of craving has been reached.*

**Sabbe sankhara anicca'ti.  
yada pannaya passati,**  
*Impermanent are all compounded things, when one perceives this with insight.*

**Atha nibbindati dukkhe.  
esa maggo visuddhiya.**  
*then one turns away from suffering; this is the path of purification.*

**Sabbesu cakkavajesu  
yakkha deva ca brahmano,**  
*May the holy entities of all the universes*

**Yam amhehi katam punnam,  
sabba sampatti sadhikam.**  
*rejoice in this wholesome meditation process performed by us, which is productive of all happiness.*

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**pamada rahita hontu  
arakkhasu visesato.**  
*be without negligence, especially in giving protection.*

**Punna bhagamidam c'annam,  
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*We share with all equally the merit of this meditation and other wholesome deeds.*

**Anumodantu tam sabbe,  
medini thatu sakkhike.**  
*May they all accept with joy our sharing, and may the earth stand witness to it!*

**Bhavatu sabbe mangalam x3**  
*May all beings be happy*

Lyrics and translation: [Birju Pandya](#)

*ps: On a related note, this sharing by Rev Heng Sure is a treat!!*